

Tablas Creek Vineyard



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Tablas Creek 2008 Antithesis (Chardonnay) White	(91-93)
Tablas Creek 2007 Antithesis (Chardonnay) White	92
Tablas Creek 2007 Côtes de Tablas Red	93
Tablas Creek 2006 Côtes de Tablas Red	89
Tablas Creek 2008 Côtes de Tablas Blanc White	(91-93)
Tablas Creek 2007 Côtes de Tablas Blanc White	90
Tablas Creek 2007 Esprit de Beaucastel Red	(95-97)
Tablas Creek 2006 Esprit de Beaucastel Red	92
Tablas Creek 2008 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc White	(90-92)
Tablas Creek 2007 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc White	93
Tablas Creek 2007 Grenache Red	92
Tablas Creek 2007 Mourvèdre Red	91

Tablas Creek 2006 Mourvèdre Red	89
Tablas Creek 2007 Panoplie Red	(96-98)
Tablas Creek 2006 Panoplie Red	95
Tablas Creek 2008 Picpoul White	(88-90)
Tablas Creek 2008 Roussanne White	(90-92)
Tablas Creek 2007 Roussanne White	91
Tablas Creek 2007 Syrah Red	92
Tablas Creek 2006 Syrah Red	90
Tablas Creek 2008 Vermentino White	87
Tablas Creek 2006 Vin de Paille Quintessence Sweet White	94
Tablas Creek 2007 Vin de Paille Sacrerouge Sweet Red	(89-91)

"This Paso Robles outpost is owned by two Francophiles, Frenchman François Perrin (one of the owners of the Rhône Valley's Château Beaucastel) and Robert Haas (founder of the import company Vineyard Brands, and a pioneer importer of estate-bottled French wines). Seeking out steep limestone ridges near the Pacific Ocean, Tablas Creek was a work in progress for its first four to five years, but it has come on like gang-busters in the 21st century. The 2007s are unquestionably their finest wines to date, but readers should not overlook the excellent 2006s.

One of California's most innovative, delicious, Rhône Valley-inspired dry whites is the **Côtes de Tablas Blanc**. The **2007** (a small crop blend of 38% Viognier, 25% Marsanne, 20% Roussanne, and 17% Grenache Blanc) is a brilliant effort revealing scents of quince, honeyed apricots, white currants, and crushed rocks. A medium-bodied wine with beautiful density, good acidity, a hint of orange marmalade, and long, fresh, crisp flavors, it should drink nicely for several years. More unctuously-textured is the honeysuckle and orange marmalade-scented, waxy **2007 Roussanne**. This full-bodied, oily-styled white is meant to be drunk with intensely flavored fish dishes over the next 2-3 years. The prodigious **2007 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc** (68% Roussanne, 22% Grenache Blanc, and 10% Picpoul) is one of the finest white Rhône Rangers I have tasted. A beautiful bouquet of orange blossoms, honeysuckle, lemon zest, quince, and white flowers is followed by a full-bodied wine with stunning concentration, layered flavors, and good underlying minerality as well as acidity. This sensational wine should provide immense pleasure over the next 3-5 years. Readers looking for a mineral-styled Chardonnay that has been aged in neutral wood should check out the **2007 Antithesis Chardonnay**. From fruit grown in pure limestone soils, this is as close as a California white can get to grand cru Chablis. Lemon zest, peach blossom, crushed rock, and white currant characteristics are present in this offering along with beautiful acidity, an underlying liqueur of wet rock-like component, and zesty acidity and freshness. It should drink well for at least 3-5 years.

2008 appears to be a very good vintage for Tablas Creek's white wines, but the only bottled 2008 I tasted is the **2008 Vermentino**, a light straw-colored effort with a greenish hue. Tart lemon zest notes are accompanied by herb and crushed rock undertones in this fresh, light to medium-bodied, crisp white. It is ideal for drinking over the next year. The unbottled 2008 whites include the **2008 Côtes de Tablas Blanc** (a blend of 42% Viognier, 26% Roussanne, and 20% Marsanne, and the balance Grenache). It exhibits attractive honeyed grapefruit, lemon blossom, and exotic tropical fruit notes, superb freshness, and good underlying acidity, ripeness, and length. Enjoy it over the next 2-3 years. The exotic, mineral-laced, fresh **2008 Picpoul** reveals some unusual tropical fruit notes, making it more flamboyant and showy than its siblings. The region's limestone soils come through in the wine's minerality. The **2008 Roussanne** appears to be as powerful, unctuously-textured, thick, and juicy as the 2007. Rich honeysuckle notes intermixed with notions of sealing wax, quince, and buttered nuts are followed by a full-bodied, dense wine that is potentially even richer and denser than the 2007. Tablas Creek's flagship white, the **2008 Esprit de Beaucastel Blanc**, is a blend of 65% Roussanne, 30% Grenache Blanc, and 5% Picpoul. It offers up sumptuous aromas of orange marmalade, lemon blossom, and white currants along with spice, crushed rock, and subtle earthy notes. This full-bodied, rich, lively white should drink well for 4-5 years. Once again, the brilliant grand cru Chablis look-alike, the **2008 Antithesis Chardonnay**, exhibits plenty of white currant, honeyed grapefruit, lemon butter, and crushed rock-like characteristics in its distinctively French personality.

With respect to the red wines, a Côtes du Rhône clone, the value-priced, delicious **2006 Côtes de Tablas** is a juicy, earthy effort made primarily from Grenache with small amounts of Syrah, Mourvèdre, and Counoise included in the blend. It offers classic black cherry, licorice, lavender, pepper, and spice notes in a medium-bodied, concentrated, silky-textured style. Enjoy it over the next 4-5 years. The **2006 Mourvèdre** (includes

10% Syrah) is one of the finest examples of this cuvée that Tablas Creek has produced. Its dense ruby/purple color is followed by a big, smoky, gamy, earthy nose displaying notions of blackberries and blueberries, medium to full body, and excellent length as well as richness. It should last for 4-6 years ... at the minimum. The **2006 Syrah**, a combination of 90% Syrah and 10% Grenache, has fleshed out nicely. It exhibits a deep ruby/purple color as well as classic aromas of cassis, black fruits, and hints of acacia flowers and charcoal. This supple-textured, richly fruity Syrah should drink nicely for 7-8 years. The brilliant **2006 Esprit de Beaucastel** (45% Mourvèdre, 28% Grenache, 22% Syrah, and the rest Counoise) possesses abundant aromas of underbrush, blueberries, blackberries, coffee beans, and licorice. An elegant, long, pure, medium to full-bodied effort, it is a faithful representation of its Mediterranean blend. Consume it over the next decade. A blockbuster offering is the **2006 Panoplie** (68% Mourvèdre, 27% Grenache, and 5% Syrah). Aged in large wood foudres and the smaller demi-muids, this beauty reveals notes of soy, roasted herbs, gamy animal, and copious quantities of black and blue fruits. With superb texture, full-bodied richness, and a long finish, it should drink nicely for 10-15 years.

The 2007 reds are the finest wines yet produced at Tablas Creek. For example, the **2007 Côtes de Tablas** is a sensational wine as well as a great bargain. The fact that it is finished with a screw cap may give some consumers the wrong impression, but this is a serious, mouthfilling red. A blend of 50% Grenache and the balance equal parts Syrah and Counoise, it exhibits sweet, gamy notes along with plenty of pepper, licorice, roasted herb, blackberry, and cassis characteristics, a velvety, lush texture, a full-bodied richness, beautifully integrated acidity, abundant Provençal typicity, and good minerality for a wine of such remarkable flavor depth. Enjoy it over the next 5-6 years. Revealing the licorice, kirsch, garrigue, and roasted herb notes one expects in a southern Rhône, the **2007 Grenache** is a full-bodied, dense, juicy, fat, fleshy red that should drink nicely for 5-6 years. The outstanding **2007 Mourvèdre** possesses a denser purple color as well as black fruit, roasted mushroom, and floral characteristics, a textured mouthfeel, and none of the harshness or rusticity Mourvèdre can sometimes provide. The finest **Syrah** to date, the **2007** includes 10% Grenache in the blend. Sweet notes of creme de cassis, tar, smoke, charcoal, and camphor are found in this deep, rich, full-bodied effort. Sweet tannin, a velvety, opulent texture, and a long finish suggest this beauty will drink well for 6-8 years. The profound **2007 Esprit de Beaucastel** (a 4,200-case blend of 44% Mourvèdre, 29% Grenache, 21% Syrah, and 6% Counoise) boasts a glorious perfume of roasted herbs, Peking duck, soy, blueberries, blackberries, and bouquet garni. This elegant yet powerful, dense, multilayered wine saturates the palate, possesses multiple dimensions, beautiful nuances, and a stunningly long finish that lasts over 40 seconds. It should provide plenty of pleasure over the next 10-15 years. Another compelling offering is the **2007 Panoplie**, a blend of 60% Mourvèdre, 30% Grenache, and 10% Syrah. About as good as a Rhône Ranger blend can be, it displays an inky/purple color as well as a big, sweet nose of Peking duck intermixed with herbs, licorice, creosote, and copious quantities of blackberry and blueberry liqueur. Full-bodied with a multilayered texture, super-sweet tannin, good underlying freshness, and an opulent, even voluptuous finish, it should easily evolve for 10-15 years.

The sweet wine offerings include the **2006 Vin de Paille Quintessence**, a 100% Roussanne cuvée possessing 280 grams of residual sugar per liter, and 8.6% alcohol. It reveals an unctuous, 10W40 motor oil-like viscosity in addition to abundant amounts of marmalade, coffee, and brown sugar notes. With surprisingly fine acidity, it is neither cloying nor heavy. The **2007 Sacrerouge** (100% Mourvèdre) offers pungent floral, pepper, blueberry, blackberry, and earthy notes. While it's hard to say how long these wines will last, both are probably best drunk during their first 5-6 years of life."